

HISTORY OF CANADA.

His Lordship arrived at Quebec on the 29th of May, 1838, commissioned as Governor General of the whole of British North America. His stay in the country only lasted five months, but he was nevertheless able to lay before the British Government in the month of January, 1839, an exhaustive report, dealing principally with the affairs of the Canadas. He recognized, as might have been expected, that the time had come for granting a larger measure of political independence to both provinces, and, without indicating the scope he was prepared to allow to the principle, made it clear that in his opinion the chief remedy to be applied was "responsible government." This however was to be conditional on a reunion of the provinces as a means of balancing the two races into which Canada was divided, and procuring as far as might be possible their harmonious co-operation in working out the destinies of the country. The imperial authorities approved the suggestion, which, however, they recognized as involving very considerable difficulty. Lord Durham might perhaps have been entrusted with the duty of carrying it into effect had he not very summarily thrown up his commission on account of the criticism which a particular measure of his had encountered in the British Parliament, and from which in his opinion the Government had not shielded him as it should have done. The man who in these circumstances was designated for the task was Charles Poulett Thomson, afterwards raised to the peerage as Baron Sydenham and Toronto.

Thomson arrived at Quebec in October, 1839, and applied himself with great vigour to his task, the most difficult part of which was to render the proposition acceptable to the province of Upper Canada, then in full possession of its constitutional rights. The constitution of Lower Canada, as already mentioned, had been suspended, and had been replaced by the appointment of a Special Council with limited powers. After much strenuous negotiation Thomson succeeded in abating certain excessive demands of the western province, and, as the Special Council in Lower Canada was favourable to the scheme, he was able to draft a Bill which with a few modifications the Home Government adopted and put through Parliament (1840). General elections were held in February, 1841, and the legislature of the united provinces met in June of that year. On the 3rd of September Mr. Robert Baldwin, then representing the constituency of North York, proposed certain resolutions affirming the principle of responsible government, which were carried with little or no opposition. On the following day Lord Sydenham (he had received this title some weeks before) met with an accident while riding which proved fatal. He died on the 19th September, 1841.

The French Canadians were almost without exception opposed to the union, and it was therefore impossible at the time to obtain co-operation of any of their leading men in the formation of a ministry. Sir Charles Bagot, Lord Sydenham's successor, fully recognized, as indeed Lord Sydenham himself had done, that the situation was a most unsatisfactory one; moreover he saw how easily a combination might at any moment be formed with the French Canadian vote in the Assembly to defeat his Government. He saw indeed such a combination on the point of being formed, and he resolved to ask Mr. Lafon-